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(6) Editorial: No jumping the gun

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
July 12, 2006

Key cabinet ministers have been sounding as if they want Japan to go
strike and destroy North Korea's missile-launching sites before they
fire missiles. Even more, they are starting to say Japan should also
acquire the capability of striking first in order to do so.

"I wouldn't say we must do nothing until we suffer damage." This
remark came from Foreign Minister Aso when he appeared on a July 9
TV program. "From now on, we will need to deepen our discussions
over whether we should acquire that capability," Chief Cabinet
Secretary Abe said in a July 10 press conference.

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Amid the international community's diplomatic efforts to resolve the nuclear problem, North Korea fired seven missiles in the name of "training." This is an extremely irresponsible act of provocation.

Someday, North Korea may fire real warheaded missiles at Japan. Its recent firing of missiles made people harbor such an intangible feeling. It is difficult to shoot down all missiles, so it might be unavoidable to carry out a preemptive strike in order for Japan to save the lives of its people. They probably wanted to raise such a problem.

Seemingly, their arguments appear plausible. However, we should think it over in a cool-headed manner.

There is no knowing where a yet-to-be-fired missile is targeted to hit. Striking first, though in self-defense, is tantamount to waging war. The question is how to find out North Korea's aim, but it would be extremely difficult to do so.

The Rodong, a missile of the intermediate-range type, has Japan within its range. Rodong missiles are reportedly deployed in mountain tunnels or elsewhere to be moved out and fired. Tremendous intelligence capabilities are needed to locate their whereabouts.

If Japan may strike first, North Korea may further try to forestall Japan's move and attack Japan. There is also such a risk.

In the event of an armed attack on Japan, the Self-Defense Forces will defend Japan's homeland, and US forces will pound enemy bases. This has been the basis of Japan's national security or its defense-only doctrine.

The government has taken the position that Japan may strike first in a very limited number of cases. In point of fact, however, the SDF,

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with its role and hardware being restricted, has not been enabled to strike enemy bases.

Conforming to the ideal of its peace constitution, Japan will never ever commit aggression against foreign countries, nor will it become a military threat. This is our national will, which has endorsed Japan's defense-only principle.

Some may argue that we need to retouch Japan defense-only posture now that we are in the age of ballistic missiles. However, striking North Korea's missile site first will undermine Japan's security policy.

We must not jump the gun as a consequence of becoming oversensitive to North Korea's provoking tactics.

Altering Japan's defense-only doctrine would inevitably stir up not only North Korea but also China, South Korea, and other neighbors.

What is most fearful to North Korea is the United States' mighty military power. What is most reliable for Japan and its national security is probably the United States' deterrence capabilities. Premised on this, Japan should seek to settle the problem on the diplomatic front as its strategy.

(7) Enemy strike argument linked to LDP presidential race

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 24) (Abridged)
July 12, 2006

Following the test firing of ballistic missiles by North Korea, an argument calling for enabling Japan to "launch a (preemptive) strike on an enemy country" has resurfaced in the Liberal Democratic Party and Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan). The argument may overturn the foundation of the nation's exclusively defense-oriented policy. Behind brave comments seems to be a tug-of-war with North Korea, as well as such other factors as the LDP presidential election in September.

Defense Agency Director-General Fukushima Nukaga, Foreign Minister Taro Aso, and LDP Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe all called for allowing Japan to launch a "preemptive strike," that is, to strike an enemy before being attacked. In reality, a preemptive strike requires: (1) a confirmed enemy base; (2) insufficient air defense of an enemy country; and (3) sufficient striking power. Is a preemptive strike a real possibility for Japan?

Military analyst Motoaki Kamiura thought such was not technically possible. He argued:

"Taepodong is the only missile that requires building a frame for fueling. Rodong and other types of missiles are hidden, being mounted on trailers. The radar systems in spy satellites and reconnaissance planes Japan and the United States can deploy are unable to catch their images to determine a target base.

Furthermore, South Korea and US Forces South Korea cannot launch a preemptive strike, according to Kamiura.

"North Korea has deployed a large amount of chemical and biological

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weapons along the demilitarized zone. That country produces 4,500 tons of chemical weapons and 1 ton of biological weapons annually. Japan's preemptive strike would result in the explosion of those weapons on the Korean Peninsula."

What caused the enemy strike argument to surface? Masaru Sato, an indicted Foreign Ministry official on leave, noted:

"It's part of the intelligence war. The intelligence war involves four factors: external, counterespionage, propaganda, and conspiracy. Japan makes good use of the last two."

According to Sato, the Koizumi diplomacy has "unintentionally" achieved a successful outcome since the issuance of the Pyongyang Declaration in September 2002. The declaration is designed to allow Japan to provide economic assistance to North Korea in return for a total settlement of the abduction issue and a freeze on the nuclear and missile development programs. In the past, the North's intimidation strategy worked, eliciting concessions from Japan. Today, Japan is on the offensive, repelling all intimidations from the North.

Sato added:

"North Korea today resembles Japan during the Battle of Okinawa in the closing days of WWII. With no hope in sight, the North is a step short of giving in to despair. The enemy strike argument is designed to further pressure the North. Pyongyang will take it seriously. The problem is that Japan is not using the theory as part of its strategy in the intelligence war. In other words, Japan may end up losing its freedom of action because of this argument."

What does it specifically mean? Former Upper House lawmaker Sadao Hirano explained:

"The enemy strike argument has the risk of lawmakers uttering hawkish words in the hope of gaining immediate popularity instead of discussing how to defend the nation based on a rational perception of the current situation. And that might fuel emotional arguments in the country. The current situation is reminiscent of prewar days."

The enemy strike theory reportedly has its roots in the unified government view released by the Hatoyama cabinet in 1956. Hirano warned:

"The Hatoyama administration spread the hawkish policy widely in the postwar period. Between the period back then and today, there are marked differences in terms of the situation in East Asia and the performance of weaponry. It is not improper to shed the same light on the two distinctive periods. The series of hard-line views are connected with moves supporting Abe, a hardliner toward the North, for the LDP presidential race."

Childish politics resulting in war underway

Political commentator Minoru Morita warned:

"If Japan declared a preemptive strike policy, other countries would do the same. Lawmakers must not play with fire that would endanger the people's lives just for the LDP presidency."

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Morita also said that the lawmakers' true mission is to maintain peace and that anyone suggesting the enemy strike theory would have been beaten up even by hawks a decade ago.

"Simply put, such a move today will result in a war. Self-styled hawks are keeping silent for fear of emotional public criticism. Childish politics making light of the people's lives has begun."

(8) Interview with Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Takenaka on five years of Koizumi reforms: Door opened for economic recovery

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 4) (Full)
July 11, 2006

The government's Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy finalized on July 7 its annual economic and fiscal policy guidelines (honebuto hoshin) for 2006, the last package for the Koizumi administration. The Nihon Keizai Shimbun asked Heizo Takenaka, who has engaged in economic policymaking since the inauguration of the Koizumi administration, for his views about the reform efforts made by Prime Minister Koizumi over the past five years.

-- What has been brought in through the Koizumi reforms?

The Japanese economy had been in an abnormal state during the dozen years or so after the bursting of the bubble economy. As economic pump-priming measures, the government stepped up investments in public works projects, resulting in piling up the nation's current account deficit. The economy, though, did not improve, and uncertainty loomed large over the nation's banking system due to huge nonperforming loans. Entrusted with economic management under such a situation, the Koizumi administration pushed for structural reforms. The reforms over the past five years contributed to stop a further deterioration of the economy and to open the door for the economy to improve.

There are two types of reform: reactive and proactive. Reactive reform is defensive, as represented by measures taken to deal with the issue of bad loans. In this case, there is no other remedy but to write off the loan claims.

During the so-called lost decade in Japan, major changes occurred in the world. With the advance of globalization, the population in the market economies in the world increased from 3 billion to 6 billion. In addition, frontier areas, like the digital revolution, have appeared. To cope with such changes, promoting proactive reform has also become necessary, and such reform was exactly what Prime Minister Koizumi pursued, based on the principle that tasks that can be done by the private sector should be done by the private sector, and the economy should be improved based on market vitality. As its symbolic challenge, there is the privatization of postal services.

The Koizumi cabinet opened the door of proactive reform. The next administration will have to continue to carry out this type of reform in order to prevent the Japanese economy from deteriorating again.

-- Making use of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, which

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was set up just before the Koizumi administration was launched, you changed the conventional policymaking method, didn't you?

A number of councils have been set up in government offices, and policy debates have been conducted in earnest. Despite such efforts, Japanese policies during the decade since the bubble economy burst did not score good results. In deliberations at such councils, with no strong political leadership demonstrated and under bureaucrats' lead, breakthrough policies cannot be worked out.

In this sense, the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy is quite different from other deliberation councils. Chaired by the prime minister, the panel discusses various matters and works out policies while seeking the prime minister's judgment. The prime minister's leadership has been displayed through the council in an unprecedented way. In part thanks to this, reforms made headway. Our council served as an engine of reform.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry took charge of economic policies, while the finance minister was responsible for fiscal policies. Economic and fiscal affairs are closely linked to each other. The policy panel took the view of managing economic and fiscal policies under a single body for the first time. As a result, it has become possible to bring about moderate economic recovery while moderately restoring fiscal soundness.

Most key terms, like *honebuto hoshin*, were coined in meetings of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy. Even so, if a certain government agency has strong influence over the council, it could become a "super council." We therefore must be careful about this.

-- The panel made compromises in coordination with the ruling parties on the financial revitalization program, postal privatization, and other reform plans, didn't it?

Policies in a democratic society must be adopted through the democratic process. There naturally are conflicting views. It is impossible to achieve a perfect score, so points must be gradually deducted. Even the prime minister cannot carry out policies just as he hopes.

Cynically speaking, this trend is, in a sense, to prove that democracy is properly functioning. Some might think that the policy panel made concessions on the issues of financial revitalization and postal privatization, but we engaged in a tactful game and achieved results based on such tactics as setting a high goal and aiming to achieve something more attainable and giving up on negotiations if this minimum goal is out of reach. We are amazed at how skilled government officials are on tactics. Government officials who can act without being diffident toward their ministries or agencies helped me. Unless common principles on policymaking are shared among experts, it will be impossible to deepen policy debate.

(9) Lost civilian control -- pullout of GSDF troops from Iraq:
Uniformed officers learned a lot from troop dispatch to Iraq

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
July 12, 2006

By Shigeru Handa

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Colonel Masahisa Sato, the leader of an assistance unit who is known for his imposing mustache, temporarily returned home secretly on April 20, 2004, three months after Japanese troops were deployed to Iraq. The purpose was to look for ways to get funds for troop activities in Iraq.

In past overseas activities, Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops had to engage themselves in repair works. But in Iraq, the number of SDF troops to be dispatched to Iraq was limited to no more than 600 personnel; consequently, a facilities unit was decided to be composed of some 50 troops. Although this figure was insufficient to do the repair work, if Iraqis were hired to make up for the shortage of staff, it would become a relief measure for the unemployed locals and contribute to bringing peace to the region. The troops to be dispatched to Iraq calculated that doing so could lead to securing their safety.

On April 7, the GSDF camp in Iraq was attacked by rockets for the first time. This attack might have stemmed from local discontent with insufficient job availability. This incident eventually led Colonel Sato, a responsible officer for public relations, to return home temporarily.

Why can't the SDF have ample funding for their activities? The reason is because laws and rules related to the SDF do not assume overseas SDF activities. In order to hire Iraqis, the SDF disbursed the employment cost from the remuneration fund, which is used to pay guest speakers invited to the Japanese camp.

After Sato returned to Iraq, this employment cost was paid from the equipment procurement budget used to purchase goods, instead of the remuneration fund. The disbursement expanded 10 times from 10 million yen per month to 100 million yen.

The "uniformed officer's lobby activity," according to a senior GSDF officer, on the government achieved a tangible result.

In addition, the GSDF had an eye on official development assistance (ODA), which is under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA) control, as a possible source to fund the cost of GSDF activities. Particularly, it targeted the grass roots grant fund cooperation under the ODA.

The upper limit of money paid out from the grass roots grant cooperation is set at 100 million yen, which is a relatively small amount. But the merit is there no need to go through clumsy proceedings, namely, if nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) apply for financial support for their plans or projects, Japanese diplomatic missions abroad can make the decision on whether to finance their plans or projects. In order to use this fund, a diplomatic establishment is necessary in Samawah. In response to the GSDF's strong call to establish such a diplomatic establishment, MOFA established an office in the GSDF camp in Samawah and installed five MOFA officials there on a regular basis.

Uniformed officers thus made one effort after the other to set the stage for SDF personnel to be stationed abroad safely. But the payment of the employment cost for Iraqis from the defense budget is suspected of stretching the definition of the defense budget. As for

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ODA, it is neither intended to finance SDF activities nor be insurance for the protection of the SDF.

Is the SDF dispatch to a battlefield intended to loosen the laws and the systems that are supposed to be observed tightly?

The troop dispatch to Iraq has brought some changes to the SDF. For example, a military-civilian cooperation office in charge of overseas activities is expected to be established in the GSDF's new readiness group that will be formed in the GSDF's Asaka base in Tokyo in March 2007. That office will be staffed by senior officers who were stationed in Iraq.

Major General Koichiro Bansho, who was dispatched to Iraq along with Colonel Sato and who served as chief of the reconstruction assistance unit, in looking back on the past years of the deployment of SDF troops to Iraq, said: "The SDF has moved in the right direction over the past 50 years since its foundation." The morale of diligent and well-trained troops did not weaken despite being in a "burning hell" where the temperature could rise above 50 degrees centigrade and where there were repeated rocket attacks.

What the SDF lacked in the past may be the experience in actual combat. Helped by weak civilian control, SDF troops were able to grope for the best way to do their operations abroad and learn a lot from the experience.

"If Japan needs to send personnel to dangerous areas, politicians tend to send SDF personnel to them," a senior GSDF officer remarked. This, too, has become a valuable lesson ahead of the next troop dispatch.

